



Betfair Media Release

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Keighley hoping for a good Forecast as maximum field goes to post in £150,000 Betfair Exchange Trophy Handicap Hurdle at Ascot on Saturday

The G3 Betfair Exchange Trophy Handicap Hurdle (3.35pm) takes place at Ascot this Saturday, December 22, day two of the Christmas Racing Weekend, and has attracted a maximum field of 21 runners. Each-way bettors can look forward to a festive treat with Betfair paying SIX places.

Boasting a prize fund of £150,000, the two-mile contest is the second most valuable handicap hurdle run in Britain – only the £155,000 Betfair Hurdle at Newbury is worth more.

Jolly's Cracked It (Harry Fry/Noel Fehily, 11st 12lb) heads the weights as he chases a second victory in the Betfair Exchange Trophy Handicap Hurdle. The nine-year-old dead-heated with Sternrubin in 2015 but has been lightly-raced since. However, he showed he clearly retains plenty of ability when successful by six lengths over the course and distance in the Coutts Handicap Hurdle on November 23 and is the 6/1 favourite with Betfair.

The regally-bred **Forecast** (Martin Keighley/Conor Shoemark, 10st 6lb, 18/1) is a full-brother to the 2008 G1 Sprint Cup heroine African Rose and also hails from the family of this year's impressive G2 Coventry Stakes winner Calyx. Forecast joined Martin Keighley's Gloucestershire yard in 2016, having previously been in France with Criquette Head-Maarek.

Following wind surgery over the summer, Forecast has shown much improved form this season and was last seen out when recording a very impressive 15-length success in a handicap hurdle over just short of two and a half miles at Lingfield Park on November 13.

Martin Keighley said today: "Forecast is doing really well. Since he had a breathing operation, his form has improved with every run.

"I am not quite sure what he beat last time at Lingfield but he did it very easily. He handled the very soft ground well at Lingfield and hopefully a strongly-run two miles around Ascot should suit him well.

"Saturday offers a big prize and we thought it was worth a shot at a race like this rather than going for another small race.

"There is a lot more rain forecast to arrive at Ascot which will suit him. The horse is really well at the moment and Conor Shoemark gets on brilliantly with him, so we are hoping for a big run."

Trainer Alan King, who landed the honours with Raya Star in 2011, has his three runners including **Fidux** (Tom Cannon, 11st 10lb, 10/1), who was impressive when landing the Listed Bet With Ascot Handicap Hurdle over two miles at Ascot on November 3. Listed Gerry Feilden Hurdle runner-up **Lisp** (Wayne Hutchinson, 11st 5lb, 10/1) and bottom weight **Chatez** (Brendan Powell, 10st, 16/1), runner-up to Jolly's Cracked It last time out, complete King's trio.

Olly Murphy landed last season's Betfair Exchange Trophy Handicap Hurdle with Hunters Call and this time around is represented by **Fiesole** (Aidan Coleman, 10st 12lb, 10/1). The six-year-old has yet to start for Warwickshire-based Murphy but was successful when last seen out for former trainer Eoin Doyle in a handicap hurdle at Tipperary in October.

Man Of Plenty (Sophie Leech/Sean Houlihan (5), 10st 11lb, 10/1) captured a Listed handicap hurdle at Sandown Park in impressive fashion on December 8. Also on the 10/1 mark with Betfair is **Mont Des Avaloirs** (Paul Nicholls/Harry Cobden, 11st 7lb), third on his return to hurdling in the Listed Gerry Feilden Hurdle at Newbury last time out. Nicholls is also represented by **Grand Sancy** (Lorcan Williams (5), 11st 1lb, 20/1), winner of the Listed Read Paul Nicholls Exclusively At Betfair Newton Novices' Hurdle at Haydock Park on November 24.

There is one Irish-trained contender in **Tornado Watch** (Emmet Mullins/David Mullins, 10st 12lb, 14/1), who took second in the G1 Grand National Hurdle at Far Hills, USA, on his penultimate start. The nine-year-old was subsequently fifth in a competitive handicap hurdle at Fairyhouse on December 2.

Other leading contenders include **Nietzsche** (Brian Ellison/Danny McMenamin (7), 12/1), who landed the G3 Greatwood Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham last month, and **Mr Antolini** (Nigel Twiston-Davies/Jamie Bargary, 11st 6lb, 11/1), successful in last season's G3 Imperial Cup at Sandown Park.

Western Ryder (Warren Greatrex/Richard Johnson, 11st 10lb, 12/1) makes a quick reappearance having come home third in last Saturday's G2 International Hurdle at Cheltenham while **Mohaayed** (Dan Skelton/Harry Skelton, 11st 10lb, 12/1) is chasing another big handicap success after winning last season's G3 County Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival. **Not Never** (Gary Moore/Jamie Moore, 10st 7lb, 14/1) makes his first start of the season, having last been seen when recording back-to-back victories at Plumpton last winter and represents a stable that does so well in big handicap hurdles.

The going at Ascot is currently **Soft**. Showers are forecast today with further rain expected to arrive overnight. Rain is predicted to clear on Friday morning for a mainly dry afternoon. Saturday is forecast to be mainly dry with possible occasional showers.

Betfair spokesman Barry Orr commented today: "We have a full field of 21 and it has been a fairly lively betting market with the fragile but talented Jolly's Cracked It, who won this race when dead-heating back in 2015, proving a very popular selection at 6/1.

"Fiesole, who has a similar profile to last year's winner and is also trained by Olly Murphy, has been well supported and is now 10/1 from 14/1."

The Betfair Exchange Trophy - Betfair Odds: 6/1 Jolly's Cracked It, 10/1 Fidux, Lisp, Fiesole, Man Of Plenty, Mont Des Avaloirs, 11/1 Mr Antolini, 12/1 Western Ryder, Mohaayed , Nietzsche, 14/1 Not Never, Tornado Watch, Flying Tiger, Cyrus Darius, 16/1 Chatez, 18/1 Forecast, 20/1 Grand Sancy, 25/1 Court Royale, Lord Napier, First Figaro, 40/1 Friday Night Light

Each-way 1/5 odds, **1-2-3-4-5-6**

The two-day Christmas Racing Weekend takes place at Ascot tomorrow, Friday, December 21 and Saturday, December 22. Saturday's six-race card runs from 12.40pm to 3.35pm and also includes the £100,000 G1 JLT Hurdle and £100,000 Garrard Silver Cup Handicap Chase.

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The Betfair Exchange Trophy Handicap Hurdle

Grade 3, £150,000 total prize fund. Saturday, December 22, two miles. For four-year-olds and upwards. Penalties: after December 9, a winner of a hurdle 4lb. No penalty to increase a horse's weight above 11st 12lb. Entries closed December 4 (42 entries), five-day confirmations December 17 (27 confirmations), final declarations December 20. Maximum field 21 runners.

Horse	Age	Wgt	Owner	Trainer/Jockey
JOLLY'S CRACKED IT (FR)	9	11-12	GDM Partnership	Harry Fry/Noel Fehily
CYRUS DARIUS	9	11-11	Mr & Mrs G Calder & P M Warren	Colin Tizzard/Colin Fehily
FIDUX (FR)	5	11-10	AXOM LXVIII	Alan King/Tom Cannon
WESTERN RYDER (IRE)	6	11-10	Albatross Club/Bryan Drew & Friends	Warren Greatrex/Richard Johnson
MOHAAYED	6	11-10	June Watts	Dan Skelton/Harry Skelton
MONT DES AVALOIRS (FR)	5	11-07	Mrs Johnny de la Hey	Paul Nicholls/Harry Cobden
MR ANTOLINI (IRE)	8	11-06	Alan & Sally Coney	Nigel Twiston-Davies/Jamie Bargary
LISP (IRE)	4	11-05	Richard & Lizzie Kelvin-Hughes	Alan King/Wayne Hutchinson
GRAND SANCY (FR)	4	11-01	Martin Broughton Racing Partners	Paul Nicholls/Lorcan Williams (5)
FIESOLE	6	10-12	LF Infrastructure Ltd	Ollie Murphy/Aidan Coleman
FLYING TIGER (IRE)	5	10-12	The Macaroni Beach Society	Nick Williams/Chester Williams (7)
TORNADO WATCH (IRE)	9	10-12	Emmet Mullins	Emmet Mullins IRE/David Mullins
MAN OF PLENTY	9	10-11	G Thompson	Sophie Leech/Sean Houlihan (5)
NIETZSCHE	5	10-11	D Gilbert, M Lawrence, A Bruce, G Wills	Brian Ellison/Danny McMenamin (7)
LORD NAPIER (IRE)	5	10-09	F Lloyd	Peter Bowen/Sean Bowen
NOT NEVER	6	10-07	Hail Sargent Evans	Gary Moore/Jamie Moore
FORECAST	6	10-06	The E, G & B Partnership	Martin Keighley/Conor Shoemark
FIRST FIGARO (GER)	8	10-06	The Bellamy Partnership	Venetia Williams/Charlie Deutsch
COURT ROYALE (IRE)	5	10-04	Janet Davies	Evan Williams/Adam Wedge
FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHT (FR)	5	10-01	Prof Caroline Tisdall & William Frewen	David Pipe/David Noonan
CHATEZ (IRE)	7	10-00	Mrs Peter Andrews	Alan King/Brendan Powell

21 runners

1 Irish-trained

Long Handicap: Chatex 9-13

Eliminated: Thistimenextyear